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# **SOME OF LIFE'S MYSTERIES**

**ROLFE POMEROY CRUM**





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## Some of Life's Mysteries



# SOME OF LIFE'S MYSTERIES

INTERPRETED IN THE LIGHT OF THE  
PRESENT WAR STRUGGLE

BY THE REVEREND  
ROLFE POMEROY CRUM  
||

*With a Commendatory Foreword by Bishop Fiske*

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## FOREWORD

The author of these addresses has just sailed for France for overseas duty. As he was leaving, his people asked him to print the addresses which they had found so helpful, first as a souvenir of his ministry, to leave with them till his return; second, as a message of faith which they might pass on to others.

I am glad to find one of our clergy bravely speaking in this simple, direct and personal way on the problems of life and giving his answer to questions which all are asking in these dark days.

I have not heard all the addresses, but I have heard about them; and what I hear tells me that the speaker succeeded admirably in driving home one great central truth which we all need to learn now as never before. Life was not meant to be merely the pursuit of happiness. Men become fine in character through conflict. The real purpose of life is to build up character—such a character as is worthy of immortality. Jesus Christ came to help us, by His life and example, to tread the road to

victory. He came, not to make life easy, but to make men great. That is a splendid message for us in these times. It is a message I have been glad to give in many ways myself and a message I am glad to find others also anxious to give in their way.

CHARLES FISKE.

*Bishop's House,  
Syracuse, 1918.*

## A Vision

I beheld in a night-vision, and lo, a single great Star, shining brightly in the heavens. And I said, "What is this?" And a Voice made reply, saying, "It is God's service flag. He has sent His Son into the world for the sake of the noble and the true and the good." And I saw that the star shone a bright gold.

Then I looked and behold, many stars appeared one by one around the great bright Star, so many that no man could number them. And I asked, "What are these and whence came they?" Then the Voice made reply, "These are they who have laid down their lives in the spirit of the Master for all that is good and honorable and holy in the world. They have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God."

And the stars shone so many and so bright that the whole heaven was lightened by them and the darkness of the night vanished.

R. P. C.





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# The Mystery of Tribulation



# SOME OF LIFE'S MYSTERIES

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## The Mystery of Tribulation

There are within each of us two natures, a pessimistic and an optimistic nature, and the two are continually struggling against each other. It is this fact which makes the world so mysterious to us and causes us to swing from one extreme to the other, to vacillate and hesitate and go through life in wonderment and bewilderment. That is the reason St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans can write: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," and then a few sentences farther on in the same letter can add, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." These two statements would seem to be absolutely contradictory. The one expresses the extremely pessimistic view, the other the extremely optimistic view, and both are true, says St. Paul. One day all the good things of life come trooping in toward us, health, friends, pleasures, happy labors well accomplished, and we meet life with a cheery smile and a joyful outstretched hand. It is a good world indeed, yes, the best possible of worlds. We are glad we are alive and we make melody all the day.

But then there comes to our door on the very next day a series of disappointments tripping each other up in their efforts to get to us, our best laid plans "gang a-gley," sickness corrodes our outlook on life, death strikes down this one or that who is near and dear to us and life takes on a leaden greyish cast. We are brought near to the heartaches of humanity and the pain and suffering of all forms of life, and we feel that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

So it is impossible to say that one man is a pessimist and another an optimist. Human nature refuses to be thus catalogued. It is both. Yet we know that the world remains practically the same, whatever our estimate of it. It is only that there are so many conflicting elements in it, so many contradictory aspects. At one time certain of them come home to us and depress us and at another time certain others enter our hearts and uplift us.

The reason that there is so much mystery about the world is because our view is foreshortened. We can see only the immediate in matter of time, the near at hand in terms of the individual. The fact that tribulation comes to us does not mean that the amount of tribulation in the world has been increased or the mystery of tribulation in a world controlled by a good God is any more difficult. Because death comes near to us, rending our very heart asunder, it is not therefore true that life in

this world is any more cruel than when it flowed along like a song—others were suffering, others were dying, even then. Nor does it indicate that death itself may not be a very good thing in the dispensation of Providence. We see only a little way ahead, we do not see things in the large, we do not see them as God sees them.

It is necessary for us to look at things, so far as in us lies, from God's viewpoint to get the long view of things. That is the purpose of such a course of addresses as this. We cannot attempt to solve all the mysteries which we have before us but perhaps we can get a glimpse of the way they must appear to God, so that to use the famous words of the astronomer who discovered the solar system, "We are thinking God's thoughts after Him."

When we consider creation in its largest sense we are confronted at once with two questions. How was it made? and why was it made? We can only answer the why by the how, and we cannot answer either the why or the how without starting from God as the source of all things. Let me explain.

**I. How was the world created?** Scientists tell us that all life was originally a small speck of protoplasm like a jellyfish; that this became differentiated in the various and multitudinous forms which we have in the world today and that the world itself was once part of the sun, which was a

great fiery cloud or nebula from which the universe originated. This is all speculation. The truth is, scientists know no more about it than does the ordinary man, but they are more daring in their guesses. Granting the truth of these speculations, no science can fully explain the origin of things. You always have something left unaccounted for. The fact that shoes are made now by very complicated machinery does not remove the necessity of presupposing a shoemaker who starts that machinery going. And in the same way the theory of evolution does not do away with a Creator who placed the speck of protoplasm here in the world and saw to it that all these forms of life came from it. Who created the fiery cloud or nebula and caused to be broken off from it the earth and the other planets? There can be but one answer, God. He is the cause and these other things are but effects. They are not causes themselves, they are effects. He alone is the final cause and the source of all things.

The man who beholds creation and denies God must be mentally undeveloped. He is not fully a man. He is what alienists would call a "sub-normal." What the psalmist said thousands of years ago is still perfectly true: "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" How can one have eyes and be so blind in understanding! How can one have ears and be so deaf to the voice of reason! If God did not bring the universe into



being, who did or what did? If God is not the source of life in the universe, then who is? I cannot understand how anyone in the face of all the testimony of creation can deny God and I am utterly amazed at the carelessness and indifference and blasphemy of men, who, though they must recognize that there is a Maker of all things, never pay any attention to Him, never bow down to Him or worship Him or pray to Him.

Let us go further. God is not only the Creator of all things. He is the sustainer of all things. He did not create the world as one might a great machine and then let it run by itself. He is in the world. He is sustaining the world. The laws of nature and of mind are His laws. They are the way He works in the world.

As we look upon creation we find as it were two worlds, an outer and an inner, a physical and spiritual. The physical world we call nature, the spiritual world we call mind. Matter is what we can see, feel, touch and taste, but mind is invisible and intangible. Yet we experience it more vividly than matter, for we ourselves are minds and our thoughts are closer to us than hands and feet. So different are these two worlds that it seems as if there were a distinct cleavage in the universe and, though matter affects mind and mind affects matter, nevertheless the two are radically different. This difference has been so keenly felt that some

religions have presupposed two Gods and even so modern and able a writer as H. G. Wells in his book, "God the Invisible King" (which is a product of the war) has claimed there must be a Creator of the Material World, which he calls "The Veiled Being," and a God of the Human Soul.

In order to avoid such a dualism, it is necessary to reduce these two worlds of matter and mind to a single principle. That has always been the tendency of thinkers on the subject—to bring the two to a single principle.

But what shall the principle be?

Materialists say matter. All thought, they say, is the product of the working of certain brain-cells. As these cells decay the mind weakens and when at last they cease their activity, death, the end of all thinking, is the result.

Such an argument is not an explanation but an assumption and arouses more difficulties than it does away with. There is nothing in common between the thought of goodness, let us say, and the activity of a brain-cell—absolutely nothing. You could not in any way derive the one from the other. The brain could not by any possibility be the cause of thinking. It may be the medium, the instrument for thought-transference as the electric wires carry the current, but it is not the cause, any more than those wires are the cause of the electricity. The decaying brain may hamper the conducting of thought in cases of insanity or senility,

as a faulty wire may impede the progress of the electrical current. But after the total dissolution of the body, the spirit continues just the same, independent of the body, as we know there is static electricity everywhere in the atmosphere about us, though uncondacted by wires.

Those who claim that mind is the single principle which will explain everything have a better case. They are the idealists in the world of thinkers. They say matter is impossible without a mind. There must be a mind to receive the sensations of feeling, tasting, smelling. If we did not have these senses, there would be no such thing as matter. The objects of the world that we see, therefore, are constructs of the mind. In this sense, it may be said that we make the external world. Without a mind to experience it, it would be impossible that there should be a world. But, you ask, doesn't the table upon which I am writing or the chair upon which I am sitting exist even though there be no one here in the room to see them or touch them? One cannot say as to that, because as soon as we return here or look in at the window to find out, there is always someone, (i. e., ourselves) to see these things.

It really does not concern us what happens when we are not here; the real reason these things are always here when we come back to them is because they are so held in a co-ordinated system by the laws of God. Every thing in the world is the

thought of God, and the reason that every thing is so logical and orderly is because God's mind is supremely logical and orderly. God is the cause of our seeing and tasting and smelling. These are thoughts which He thinks first for us in an orderly, consistent system. The material world is not outside of us. The ideas we have of it come from God. They are the effects, God is the cause.

This may all, perhaps, sound like mere theoretical and impractical reasoning; but it has a great practical value for us. It shows how closely we are linked to God, how our very thoughts concerning the world are His thoughts, how our very minds are in essence parts of His mind as the leaves are part of the tree. It shows that we are absolutely dependent upon God. That is what St. Paul meant, I think, when he said to the Athenians on Mars Hill, "In Him we live and move and have our being." God is everywhere about us, continually present with us, sustaining us all the day long. There is nothing in the world, no detail however small, of which God is not aware. "There is no searching of His understanding. He trieth the reins and the heart."

Sometimes we think that we are so little in comparison with the vastness of creation, surely God does not care for us, He is not concerned with such trivial things as ourselves and what we do. Then it is well for us to remember that God's creative

power is continually operating in the world, to the smallest blade of grass; that there is nothing in creation outside of His knowledge. "Thou, God, seest me and knowest me through and through." And if it is true that God knows all things, there is a still greater truth, that He cares for us, loves us as persons, because He has made us in His own image and given us the longing for Himself. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him and the son of man that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor."

II. If God loves us and knows our every thought and also controls every event that happens in the universe, why, you ask, is it what it is? "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Surely the world as we know it is not a world so designed as to give happiness to the inhabitants thereof. We sometimes agree with the wit who said that he wished he had been present on creation day, he would have had some suggestions to make. There seems to be an utter disregard for human comfort, yes, even for human life—extremes of cold and heat, famine and thirst, earthquakes, tornadoes, lightning and tempest—nature is no respecter of persons. Add to these dangers from the elements the dangers of war, the machines of destruction, the cannon and the bomb, the poisonous gas and the submarine—

and it seems as if God did not care about human beings. God allows these things. Why? Why did He not create a Utopia where there should be no more war, why does he not create a Beulah land where sorrow and sighing shall flee away and where there shall be singing and joy all the day?

It is quite evident that if we are to reconcile the seeming disregard for human life with the goodness of God, we must presuppose another life beyond this. I shall not at this time summon any other reasons why we should believe in such a future life. I shall do that in another chapter, the one upon the "Mystery of Death." But even if the resurrection of our Lord had not revealed it to us or if the Church had not taught it, necessarily we should have to come to the conclusion that there is a life beyond, a life so much better than this life that those who live the shortest time here and are taken there are the happiest; that there all the injustices of this life shall be readjusted and "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

See how different such a faith makes everything in this world. Life here in this world is but a preparation for life in the next. This is but a school where we are tested and tried to see if we are worthy. This life is a struggle through which we are developed and made strong. Everything that

comes to us, all the hard things of life, all the sorrows and anxieties and obstacles and temptations, are sent us to make us stronger men. Once we realize this, once we adopt the fighting attitude of mind and set our teeth with firm determination not to go down in defeat, but to prove ourselves worthy, then we shall discover that a wonderful miracle is being wrought within us, whereby we go from strength to strength; then we shall realize what St. Paul meant when he said, "All things work together for good to them that love God," not all things work together for the physical comfort or the mental ease, but for the spiritual good, for the growth in grace, of them that love God. If we are worthless and unfit, then let our path through life be primrosed with every pleasure and let not trouble come near us; but if we want to be men and grow into strong sons of the living God, then let our way be jagged and steep and our feet bleeding and lacerated from the sharp stones. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be My son."





# **The Mystery of Temptation**



## The Mystery of Temptation

Let us start with two verses from the same chapter of the Epistle to St. James that seem to give us flatly opposing statements: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." Here we have a concrete problem with two solutions offered, one which says that temptation is a good thing and comes as a blessing to a man, the other of which says temptation is a bad thing and can not come from God.

St. James is writing here under the fire of persecution. He knows what are the terrible temptations to which his flock are subject. How easy by a word to deny their allegiance to the Master and thus escape the jaws of the lion! How easy by a single act to bow down and worship the emperor's statue, when the alternative is being burned to death at the stake! Yes, St. James feels the full force of temptation—the temptation to cowardice—as he writes, and yet what are the words he writes? Are they, Wretched is the man, sad, miserable he who endureth temptation? No, these are the words: "Happy is he who endureth temptation."

Happiness! How could that possibly be derived from temptation? How could they who meet the

martyr's death be happy? How could they sing who were being burned at the stake? And yet they did. St. James goes on to tell why: "Happy is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

Here we have what seems to be an absolute contradiction. On the one hand, we are told that temptation is a good thing for a man. "Blessed is he—that is, happy he—who endureth temptation" and on the other hand, we are told that temptation does not come from God who is the giver of all good things. Yet these two statements are written by the same man and stand next to each other in the same chapter of the same letter.

The apostle knew that the temptation to cowardice did not come from God. God does not want His children to be cowards. He wants them to be brave sons of His, like the One Whom He sent into the world to be their example, who bore sufferings and sorrows, rejection and failure, insults and disgrace, the scourge and the cross, without complaint but with perfect love for mankind and with entire trust in His Heavenly Father. And so the apostle in the very next line of the letter writes: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." These temptations come from our own selfishness, our desire for the things of this world, its pleasures and comforts.

It is the same temptation that the early Christians met which is coming now to every able-bodied young man in our country today—the temptation to cowardice. I am not talking to those who are restrained by the necessity of supporting those who are really dependent upon them. I am not talking to those who are in necessary occupations here and can not be dispensed with. I am talking to those who are uncertain, those who when the call comes to take up arms in defense of innocence and in support of righteousness, know they ought to go but can not make up their minds to go. The nation has issued the call. Here is the alternative—to accept it or reject it.

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side.”

Your nation has made the decision. Have you? Let me say you will never be satisfied with yourself, you will never have that peace of mind which is so essential to spiritual growth, until you do make your decision for that which is noble and good. Peace is the crown of life which God promises to them who do His will. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” It is so easy to

pamper oneself with physical comforts and to become wedded to the round of fancied pleasures, when all the time the cry goes up over there for men and more men.

And I say to the fathers and mothers and sisters and sweethearts—the same temptation comes to you—the temptation to cowardice. It is easy to tell one we love and to whom we cling, that he should not go, to beg him not to go, to weep over him when he does go. But do you know what you are doing thereby? You are making the separation doubly difficult. You are weakening him in his determination, you are discouraging him, you are sapping his manly spirit. When you bid him goodbye, let there be no tears—if these must needs come, let them be in the quiet of the night hours—but when you say goodbye let there be only a smile and a word of encouragement: “My boy, I am proud of you. Be brave, be clean, be strong, and we are going to pray for you that God will help you to be such. We know that you are doing the right thing, the noble thing, the thing the Master would have you do. God bless you, God bless you.”

“Yes,” you say, “but **our** boy, he was always brought up in our peaceful home, we have been very careful of him, he knows little of the world, the sins and the vices of the great outside, he knows nothing of hardships and loneliness and pain.”

My answer is, then it is time that he learned.

He must learn the difference between innocence and righteousness.

This is the first of three distinctions which I wish to make in discussing the subject of temptation. I think we shall better understand the meaning and value of temptation in life, if we make clear these distinctions. They are: (1) We must distinguish clearly between innocence and righteousness. (2) We must distinguish clearly between temptation and sin. (3) We must distinguish clearly between sins and sinfulness.

**I. There is a great deal of difference between innocence and righteousness.** One can not remain innocent all his life, for innocence means that one is unacquainted with temptation, has no knowledge of good and evil. But when one knows good and evil, and abhors that which is evil and clings to that which is good, then is he a righteous man, then is he a conqueror over sin.

The ancient allegory of the Garden of Eden will help us to make the distinction clear. No story from the Bible has been so misinterpreted and sneered at and jested about as this from the first chapters of Genesis. It is because literally-minded people have insisted upon taking as history what was meant to be an allegory and have ignored its true spiritual meaning. The story is not told to show original sin but original innocence. It is not told to show that all men are born sinful by inheri-

tance, rather it is told to show that all men are born innocent and of divine heritage. Divinity is our birthright and not sin.

God made Adam, so the ancient allegory goes, a perfect man, in entire innocence, and surrounded him with every earthly blessing, but Adam by disobedience to God's command forfeited the right to those blessings, and was cast out of the beautiful Garden. God could make Adam innocent but He could not make him righteous. Innocence means ignorance of sin, but righteousness means conquest over sin.

Does not each of us repeat in his life-history that Genesis story? The babe is born as pure as the dew from heaven.

“Not in entire forgetfulness,  
Not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home.”

The growing child lives amid a world of beauty. It is a veritable Garden of Eden to him. There is joy and song on every hand, and everything is good as the gift of God. He knows no bad, but only that certain things are forbidden him, as God himself forbade the fruit of the tree of knowledge to Adam. Everything to the child is bathed in God's sunshine.



“There was a time when meadow, grove and  
stream  
The earth, and every common sight,  
to me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light.”

But there comes a time in the life of the growing boy or girl when they ask the question, “Why not?”—when they must reason things out for themselves and learn the difference between good and evil. They can not longer be forced to obey, their reason must be appealed to. They are no longer to be protected and kept in ignorance, they must be strengthened in the inner man to withstand the crafts and subtleties of the devil. Then their innocence ripens into righteousness. They must decide for the good and reject the evil. A conscience has been born in them which makes them entirely different.

It is true that this process of rebirth is oftentimes painful, that so much seems to be lost of all that was glorious before.

“It is not now as it hath been of yore  
Turn wheresoe’er I may  
By night or day  
The things that I have seen I now can see  
no more.”

The Garden has vanished where everything was so beautiful and good, and in its place stretch out

before us two roads, the one broad and winding, leading to destruction, the other straight and narrow but leading to eternal life. It is true that the youth may choose the wrong way, it is certain that he will blunder about a good deal and even get lost, but it is only through the freedom of choice of the two roads that the strong sons of God are made. That is the reason God has given us freedom. He would rather have us as conquerors than have us as babes, He would rather have us as men than have us as puppets, He would rather attract us by the power of His love to the love of righteousness, than compel us by the power of His will.

And I ask you parents, would you not rather have it so with your own boy? Would you not rather have him learn to fight all forms of sin in the world than not to know, to be kept in ignorance of all sin and all hardship? Would you not rather have him a man than a moral weakling? I would not minimize the risk involved, I know the chances of his blundering and his wilfully setting himself in opposition to the good, but the reward of righteousness is far greater than the cost of the struggle. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." The crown of life—what does that mean? It means the fullness of joy in victory over oneself, in a battle well fought.

II. The second distinction I wish to make is that between temptation and sin. It is no sin to be tempted. Our Lord Himself was tempted. Not once, but many times, the devil appeared; now in the wilderness; again in the form of the multitude who clamored for a physical sign, a sensational manifestation of His divinity; again in the voice of Peter who tried to dissuade Him from going the Way of Sorrows; finally in the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane, when He prayed that the cup should pass from Him, but when He conquered over fear and prayed again, "Not My will but Thine be done." Our Lord was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He threw off temptation as a rock throws off the waves of the sea. It is not sin to be tempted, but it is sin to yield to temptation. And by yielding I do not necessarily mean the performance of the act which the temptation demands. Assent to sin is sin. When we say "yes" to the temptation, we are virtually committing the sin. The cashier in the bank who is deterred from absconding with the bank's funds simply by the fear of being caught, who keeps saying "I would if I dared," is a thief at heart. Yes, he is worse than a thief, he is both thief and coward.

The reason we have temptations is not because God sends them to us but because our lower nature suggests them to us. "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God.'" If you want to personalize it, call it the devil in us. Indeed, it

is truly a personal Satan who makes the suggestions; they come from without, although our lower nature admits them within. But there is also the God in us. There is also the divine nature which is continually warring against the lower. If we allow the lower nature to rule we are of the earth, earthy. If we allow the higher nature to rule, we are obedient to the heavenly vision. The lower nature is our heritage from the animal kingdom, the spirit which insists upon the I, the greedy, grasping, selfish spirit which seeks to preserve and enlarge the individual at all costs. But the divine spirit is our heritage from God, the spirit of love and unselfishness and true service, only in obedience to which the most abiding peace and the fullest joy and the richest life can be found. The two natures are always struggling against each other, but one, the highest, constitutes our true selves, the self which God intends us to be. The other is an intruder, a usurper, a thing foreign to our true nature, and if we yield to it we are selling our divine birthright for a mess of pottage. For the heights of our experience constitute our true selves. The noblest thought we ever had, the greatest act of self-sacrifice we ever made, the most fervent prayer we ever uttered, the most vital faith we ever experienced—these are our true self, these are what we are. Let us not debase that self by yielding to our lower selfish nature at any time.

**III. We must distinguish finally between sins and sinfulness.** It has been said that the modern man is not greatly troubled about his sins. If that is so, something is wrong. He would be greatly troubled if he had a bad cough and a high fever and ached in every bone. He would at once call a physician because he would know these are symptoms of disease. One's sins that he commits bear the same relation to sinfulness as symptoms to a disease. One's sins are the symptoms but the disease is deeper-seated in the soul—a state of sinfulness. When one commits sins he is proceeding in direct opposition to God's will and that is the really great sin—not the lie that he told or the money that he stole. These are manifestations, they are indications of the sinful heart, but one may have the sinful heart, though he does none of these things. He may wilfully separate himself from God, be indifferent to Him, refuse to obey Him, rebel against Him, become alienated from Him—that is sinfulness. Sinfulness is whatever destroys that beautiful relationship of love between God and His children. God's love is unchangeable, He is ever seeking us, ever pleading with us, ever begging us to come back to Him. If there is some reason why we are far from God we are to blame, we have erected a barrier, we have closed the door and that barrier is our sinful selfish wills which are opposed to His will. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open unto me I will come in and will

sup with him." O let us break that barrier down, let us open wide the door and place our hands in His and ask Him to enter and let His will have entire control over ours.

And never doubt that, if we do this, He will give us His strength to make us strong. It will take a struggle at first, but there is one way and only one way to win out—by prayer. We cannot depend upon ourselves in this battle. We must ask God's power to come into our hearts, and then we must ask again and again and again. "Pray without ceasing," morning, noon and night, wherever you are, in the office, in the home, in the shop, turn your thoughts heavenward. Fight your temptations with your prayers and you cannot fail to win. With every victory you will be made stronger, with every temptation conquered you will be given greater resistance, until at last the temptation will leave you, yes, with a blessing, as Jacob was given a blessing after that struggle lasting all the night through, as Jesus was left with the blessing after those forty days in the wilderness. "Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold angels came and ministered unto Him."

# The Mystery of Pain





## The Mystery of Pain

Pain is one of the most vitally real things in life; indeed it is at the foundation of life. All must suffer, some more, some less, but none escape suffering. As St. Paul says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." There is first of all spiritual pain—anxiety, despondency and remorse, which, though more subtle than bodily pains, are none the less real. There is sickness, with all that it means of bodily decay. There is finally physical suffering, which is on every hand, both in the human and the animal kingdom.

What is the reason for all this pain in life? Surely God would never have allowed it unless there were some reason for it. It is written over the face of nature in too large letters to be ignored.

Consider the great increase of pain caused by this war. When one goes through the hospitals in France and sees men with arms and legs cut off, and faces mutilated beyond recognition, our own familiar aches and discomforts seem unreal in comparison.

In considering the subject of pain and its meaning in life, I would ask you to recall the purpose of this course of addresses; to look, in so far as we can, upon the world as God sees it. I would ask you to get the long view of things and to rise above

all self centredness and every partial viewpoint, in order to behold things in the large. I know how hard it is when one is in the throes of agony, when one is tossing all the weary night through on a bed of pain, to think that this pain is necessary or that there is a reason for it; but let us, when we are well and strong, fortify ourselves against those times of doubt by having some well worked-out philosophy of life which will not succumb to the inroads of suffering. Let us ask ourselves two fundamental questions: First, How did pain come? and secondly, How are we to meet it?

### **I. How did pain come into the world?**

It is evident that pain is in some way connected with sin. Our moral sense, our sense of justice, tells us it must be so. We hear men ask with regard to one who is suffering much, "What has he done that he should have such punishment?" and you will remember that the disciples asked of Jesus, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents?" Mark you, I do not say that pain comes as the result of the sin of the individual who suffers, but nevertheless it comes as the result of sin somehow, somewhere, sometime.

In the structure of the universe it is written that sin brings with it misery and suffering. These are the consequences of the breaking of God's laws. God supports His universe through His laws. They are His way of working in the world. They are

not shackles on His hands and His feet. They are His hands and His feet.

These laws must work impersonally, regularly, immutably, or else they would be of no value and the universe would fall to pieces. I remember spending an afternoon witnessing the performances of a great prestidigitator. He plucked things out of the air that were not there before, he raised bodies from the floor by the mere word of his command. But the world in which he lived was one of chaos, and we all breathed a sigh of relief when the performance was over and we returned once more to the universe of law and order. We would not be able to live in a world where laws worked sometimes and were suspended in their operations at other times. It would be an undependable world.

The laws which support the physical universe may be used by man but must not be broken by him. The law of gravity, which makes walking possible, also makes falling possible, and falling is likely to be followed by pain. Fire, which warms our bodies, may also burn them, and burning is usually accompanied by pain. Every thing that God has given has its use and its mis-use, and the mis-use brings suffering as its consequence. That is the way God teaches us the right use of things—through suffering.

This is not only true of the physical world, but of the moral universe as well. There are some diseases that come directly as the result of sin.

They show God's condemnation of self indulgence. Indigestion comes as the result of gluttony. A weakened constitution, subject to all manner of disease, comes as the result of drunkenness. A cankered, germ-laden body comes as the result of impurity. But the individual who breaks God's moral laws is not the only one to suffer. Our hospitals, our orphans' homes, our insane asylums are filled with the victims of another's sins. Families ruined, homes destroyed, infants born blind or feeble-minded—surely "the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me."

We might go on and show how not only the grosser, bodily sins bring pain as their consequence, but the sins of the spirit, like selfishness and hate, cause spiritual misery, which though a more refined form of suffering is no less intense.

I think we are now ready to formulate some constructive philosophy as to the meaning of pain in life.

God creates man in perfection, in His own image, capable of divinity. He gives him every good thing, He gives him also freedom of choice between the use and the mis-use of these good things. And what is the result? Man has gone stumbling, blundering, sinning, through countless generations; mis-using the good, selling his divine birthright. God has hedged us about with laws which are for our benefit if properly obeyed, but the over-stepping

of which is attended by fatal consequences. These consequences come not only to him who disobeys but to the entire human race.

Of what does all this remind you? Is it not the ancient allegory of the Garden of Eden? That ancient story contains the germ of this important truth: sin is disobedience of God's laws, and brings with it pain not only to those who sin but to the whole human race. The story reveals to us the sinfulness of sin and our corporate responsibility.

We are knit together in one great social fabric. No man stands or falls alone; either he lifts others up or he drags them down. There is no such thing as personal liberty to do wrong. That is a false, shallow and specious philosophy, for others have to suffer the consequences of the wrong doing of the one. The great principle of vicarious suffering is woven in the warp and woof of life.

Is not the war teaching us the truth of that principle? Is it not forcing it home to us? These men who are enduring the pain and perils of war are not going to suffer for their own sins—many are of the noblest and highest minded of our generation—but for the greed and selfishness and hatred, which are the curse of the human race. And we must not think that these sins are exclusively characteristic of our enemies, but in so far as we are partakers, we are responsible for this war.

To summarize how pain came into the world: God's plan for man is health and joy and happiness.

But man through sin or disobedience of God's laws has brought misery and suffering upon himself.

## II. How shall we meet pain?

The theoretical question leads us to the practical question: "How are we to meet suffering when it comes upon us?" So always theory leads to practice. There can be no divorce between the two. We cannot discard theory and say to it, "get thee to a nunnery." There can be no right action without right thinking.

(1) **Pain should recall to us the sinfulness of sin.** By that I do not mean necessarily personal sin, though it is well for us when we are laid low by sickness to look over our lives and see how far we are individually responsible for the suffering. Suffering, however, does not, as a rule, mean punishment. It may mean that, but not usually. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The good suffer for the sins of the wicked, the innocent are on the rack for the sins of the guilty.

When suffering comes upon us, however, we must not be too hasty in declaring ourselves free from the corporate sins of humanity. All of us share in some degree those sins, and it is through suffering we are purged of them. It has a cleansing effect just as fire burns out that which is stubble. A wound very often has to be purified by caustic.

So when suffering makes its abode with us, we are to remember that it may be sent by God to cleanse our hearts and make us worthy vessels of His grace. As such we ought not to rebel but to welcome it.

Why is it that, in the hospitals and sick rooms, we find often such sweet Christian souls reflecting the spirit of the Master even in their faces, and in their smiles? Is it not because they have gone through much suffering and been purged of pride and selfishness and arrogance? We see the ungodly grow fast and "flourish as the green bay tree" but sometime they too must be tested by fire,—if not now, then in the after life, for they cannot reach the heaven of God's companionship till all the gold is refined and the dross is consumed. That is what is meant by that ancient text, which seems so crude to us of this day, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." It means that without suffering there can be no purging from sins. Those who sin much here and suffer little will have to meet their suffering sometime, somewhere, and those who sin little and yet suffer much, here, are already purged and prepared to be received into the presence of God.

It must be so. Every instinct of our nature tells us it is so. Often we kneel beside a child's bed of pain, the little head tossing on the pillow, the tiny fingers clenched in anguish and the frail voice asking why, why, and why, again. It all appears very black to us. And when that child is taken

from our sight—often, it would seem, the best, the dearest, the saintliest—then may not our darkness be lightened by this thought: God wanted that soul for His heaven, as a flower in His garden. Through pain and suffering He was preparing that soul, the spirit was breaking the chains of the flesh, the seed was bursting the shell in which it was encased. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes."

(2) **Suffering should recall to us our corporate responsibility.** We have seen how closely knit together we all are, not only by family ties but by social ties. Suffering is the link that binds us all—rich and poor, educated and ignorant, white or black. What then should be its teaching for us? Does it not speak to us of love and sympathy whereby all pride and avarice and arrogance are put away?

Consider how the suffering caused by this war has made the whole world akin. Women are making bandages for soldiers they have never seen. Men are giving their time and risking their lives to help those in pain. And all are giving money for the alleviation of suffering. So the war has caused a marvelous growth in sympathy. It has wrought miracles in changing the petty, the selfish, the lazy, the sullen, the self-centered, into the loving and kind and generous and sympathetic.

Always when suffering comes upon us it may



teach us this lesson of sympathy. I remember the remark which a superintendent in a hospital made with regard to a young nurse who had just graduated with high honors. "All she needs now to make her an ideal nurse is to have a real attack of fever." We can give sympathy so much better when we have suffered pain. We can give consolation so much better when we have endured bereavement. We can give comfort so much better when we have borne despair. That is what St. Paul means when he says, "The God and Father of mankind who comforteth us in all our affliction, comfort you that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction."

Is not this one of the reasons why pain exists in the world and has it not its place in the divine economy, in that it cultivates sympathy and love? I would not advocate any morbid seeking of pain, such as the ascetics of the middle ages pursued, who slept in hair-shirts and on boards pierced with sharply-pointed nails in order to cultivate humility of spirit. But when pain knocks at our door, then are we to understand that it comes to speak to us a message of sympathy for those who suffer. St. Paul exemplified the truth of this when he wrote to his companions and called them "fellow sufferers" and "fellow prisoners." They were all bound in one communion of suffering.

But greatest of all Jesus Christ Himself illustrates the fellowship of suffering. God came down and

took man's nature upon Himself and humbled Himself to the death upon the cross for us who lay in darkness and the shadow of death. God thereby reveals His sympathy for us in our sufferings and teaches us the lesson of sympathy with all those who suffer.

**(3) Through pain we may learn the goodness of God.** That seems a paradox but very often paradoxes are true in life. How can suffering reveal the goodness of God? Is it not by showing that health and strength and happiness and joy are things for which we should be thankful to God? He is the giver of all good gifts and we should praise Him every day of our lives for His manifold blessings to us. Days of cloud and rain we know are necessary to make us appreciate the sunshine. Days of sickness are necessary to make us appreciate health. Days of sorrow are necessary to make us appreciate joy.

But may we not also be thankful for the days of cloud and sickness and sorrow themselves. We know the rain has its uses as well as the sunshine. So, also, with sickness and sorrow. They have their value for us. In their school-room we may learn spiritual knowledge. "It is good for me," writes the psalmist, "that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes." When one tosses upon a bed of pain, he must not think God is far from him. He is as close to us as our thoughts.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for 'Thou art with me.'"

All that I have said about suffering is to be found in the Christian doctrine of the Cross, which the Church has taught for so many ages.

The Cross shows that the Christ suffered for the sins of humanity—because sin always brings with it suffering, somehow, sometime.

The Cross shows that the Christ saved the world from its sins—because suffering cleanses and purges from sin.

The Cross shows that God loves us—He does not leave us to suffer alone, but suffers with us, being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

The Cross in the light of the Resurrection shows that there is a glory which is obtainable only through suffering.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

In those hours when we are laid low by sickness and are bowed under the yoke of pain we are to remember these truths, and face suffering not in the spirit of rebellion but in the spirit of patience, "giving thanks always for all things," rejoicing that we are partakers with Christ in His sufferings and that we are doing our share in the divine process of redemption.



# The Mystery of Death



## The Mystery of Death

A great council of all the chiefs and princes of the Britons had been called at Goodmanhaus in Northumbria. There sat in that great banquet hall of the King's castle a hundred armored warriors with all the pride of their manly strength. Rich tapestry walled the room, huge oak beams braced the high vaulted ceiling. Here was primitive pomp and power. Upon a raised dais at one end of the room sat the King of Northumbria surrounded by his court and body-guard. Down on the floor of the hall, on one side stood a group of Druid priests all dressed in brown, and on the other side, a group of Christian monks, all garbed in black cassocks, with their hair tonsured to represent the crown of thorns which the Saviour wore at His trial. An aged noble rose to speak and there was silence in the hall.

"The life of man, O King, in comparison with that unknown life beyond, is like a sparrow's flight through the hall, when we sit in winter time at meat, a goodly fire on the hearth but the snow-storm beating without. The sparrow flies in through one door and for awhile is safe in the warmth, but then he flies out at another door into the dark winter from whence he came. So is the life of man for a short space; but of what he was before and of what is to follow after, we have no

knowledge. If this new Christian doctrine will tell us aught of that, then let us follow it."

And from the little group of Roman monks, there stepped forward one whose name was Paulinus and spoke so eloquently of heaven and the future life that he won the support of all the chieftains there and changed the whole course of English history.

The same question which was asked at that council in Northumbria is being asked today in a hundred thousand different places. This war with its enormous toll of human life has brought home to us as never before the mystery of death. It is the same mystery as before, but it has been forced upon our thought by the casualties of war. "If a man die, shall he live again?" we cry, even as did Job in that ancient drama of life. Think of it! Ten million souls blotted out of earthly existence in the four years past, men who were the strongest, the most useful, the most loved. And now we in this country are beginning to feel the deep sorrow that must have lain over the warring nations for these several years, as we see the ever-growing casualty lists of the daily newspapers. Have these men simply given up a hopeless existence in a righteous cause? Was their sacrifice only a noble mistake; or do they live in a more glorious world beyond? Is there any immortality other than that of human memory and granite and marble? Shall their loved ones greet them once more at some future time, the child returned to his father's embrace? These and



countless other queries are on the lips of thousands in these dark days. Some turn to science for an answer, some to religion, and from each an answer is received.

I wish to summarize, if I may, the answers which come to us from these two fields of knowledge. For that reason, we are going to do away, for the time being, with any revealed knowledge. We will not resort to any truth from the Bible or any dogma of the Church and say you must believe it because it is written or because it is taught. Every doctrine to be worth while must be made personal; it must appeal to one as credible and not contrary to reason, in order to be of value to the individual in his own life. A faith which prides itself on contradicting reason and the five senses is not built upon a stable foundation. It will not support one in time of crisis, when it is most needed. Faith must go beyond reason, but it must not contradict reason. I want you to get from this address this most valuable truth for your lives: there is nothing that contradicts reason in the belief in immortality; in fact it is most unreasonable not to believe in it; the evidences of science, ethics and religion point to its truth. It is true I do not expect to prove it by logical processes of demonstration, but I do hope to appeal to the faith which lies in you—which faculty God has given you as a channel of knowledge as

truly as the intellect—so that you will feel certain of the truth of immortality.

**I. And first as to the results of science.**

I will omit the results of **Psychical Research** which has sought to investigate spirit appearances and mental telepathy. There is so much that is chaff mingled with the wheat that it is very difficult to distinguish between the two. Nevertheless, great minds, astute thinkers and keen scientists, such as Sir Oliver Lodge, have been won over by the so-called proofs of the re-appearing of departed persons.

(1) I will proceed at once to the evidences that come to us from a study of **Comparative Religions**. To the student of world-religions, there is one striking fact which impresses itself upon the inquiring mind. It is the universality and the persistence of a belief of some sort in a life after death. Almost all races and peoples from the primitive to the most highly civilized, in spite of the fact that they cannot see a spirit after death, nevertheless believe that the spirit still lives. The mere fact that the belief is almost universal is not of itself convincing—all people at one time believed the earth was flat—but the fact that the belief in a future life has persisted from generation to generation, and this, in spite of the testimony of the senses which behold only the dissolution of the body,—that fact, I say,

entitles the belief to be considered an instinct of the human race. God has implanted many instincts in our being, but every instinct has a meaning. The mother's instinct would be meaningless, were there no children; hunger would be meaningless, were there no food; thirst would be meaningless, were there no water. So also the instinctive belief in a life after death strongly indicates the reality of such a life.

(2) Let us now proceed to the argument from **Biology**. In tracing the development of life through various forms from the lowest, say the oyster, to the highest, man, it becomes clear that the purpose of the process of evolution is the emancipation of the soul from the body. In the lowest forms, we have the complete subordination of mind to matter; in the highest forms, we have the complete superiority of mind over matter. We see in different persons a great difference in regard to this; we call the difference one of personality or strength of will-power. The development of personality consists in the subjugation of the senses and the passions to the will. In every stage of evolution in nature, it is the few who progress, the many who remain unevolved.

What does this process of evolution point to? Dr. James A. Hadfield, a famous scientist and a surgeon in the Royal English Navy, gives the answer: "Before birth we were undifferentiated souls, we were

parts of the cosmic mind, we were as water drawn in a pitcher from the mind pool. Our destiny is to grow personalities out of the raw material with which we began life."

It is quite evident from such a conclusion that the state of one's future life is conditional upon one's life here. There are many who never evolve personalities, they are subject to their bodily desires and passions, their wills do not dominate their actions, they are not individuals in any true sense, they have missed the purpose of life. The purpose of this life is to test and try and to differentiate souls so as to prove which are worthy of the highest life beyond or rather which are capable of such a life. The difference will be one therefore of degree. We know that within each one of us is a lower self, which is our heritage from the animal kingdom, and that there is a higher self, which is divine, and from the struggle between the two is developed the bestial and the best of humanity. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

It is possible to achieve the highest immortality. Every time we conquer over the lust of the flesh, every time we resist the temptation to selfishness, every time we do an heroic and self-sacrificing act, as do the soldiers in giving their lives for their country, every time we feed and nourish the higher life in prayer and love and faith, this corruptible is putting on incorruption, this mortal is putting on im-

mortality, and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

(3) There is another scientific proof of immortality—from the field of **Anthropology**. When we compare man and the lower animals, we find that not only in the body but in the mind do they differ. Man has reason, a sense of the beautiful, a sense of worship, a sense of right and wrong. We can find no trace of these in any of the animals. Do not these belong to man's higher nature, and is it likely that a God who created these would allow them to perish with the dissolution of the body? There are no physical aspects to correspond to these peculiar characteristics of man. They do not die with the body, therefore. They are introduced somewhere in the evolutionary process by the Master of the Universe and with them is introduced also the possibility of immortality.

For why should God have developed in man faculties out of all proportion to the necessities of life here in this world—we could live, as the animals do, without them—if man is not to make use of them in another and more complete life? No, there is a richer and fuller world where our sense of reasoning shall dwell on God's truth, where our sense of beauty shall feast on God's glory, where our sense of justice shall be satisfied in God's good-

ness, where our sense of worship shall be exalted in God's majesty. These human faculties are but fore-shadowings of the divine.

So it is that the Theory of Evolution, which was supposed at first to destroy all possibility of immortality by showing that we are descended from the animals in body, upon being re-interpreted, points directly to the belief in a future life by showing that we are different from the animals in our minds.

(4) Is there not also a large degree of light to be thrown upon the problem by the very fact that science has opened up to us a new world—a **world of law**? It has whetted our curiosity, as it were. There are so many mysteries which are yet unsolved, so many dark places upon which no light has been thrown. The victories of modern science have only increased our yearning. "On earth to many a noble-hearted student of the universe," as someone has said, "the sting of death is ignorance." To die without knowing the answers to these riddles of the universe, to have one's life snuffed out without knowing any better the meaning of creation—this could not be God's purpose for us, the God of light and truth and goodness—and I, for one, approach that portal of the dawn which we call death with a reverent curiosity.

## II. What are the reasons which religion can advance for a belief in the future life?

There is in the Bible a clear statement of what our Lord regarded as the main reason for His belief: "As touching the dead that they are raised, have ye not read in the Book of Moses in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

At first blush, this seeming appeal to a proof-text is not at all convincing, but our Lord's interpretation of it shows on deeper insight great depth of reasoning. To say that God is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob is to say that He is a God of persons, that He values each one as an individual, that He bears a relation of affection for each one. This is the chief and the most cogent reason for believing in a personal immortality—the fact that God cares for human beings not merely as humanity in general but as souls in particular. He loves us as His children. God is not simply a blind force behind all nature or the vague spiritual background behind all existence, He is a personal Being capable of love. The highest thing on earth is personality, that is the supreme acme of the evolutionary process, and shall we say that the Creator is less than the creature, that the Cause is less than the effect? O let us not make God less than ourselves! Rather the best in us is only the reflection

of God. The noblest personality we know on earth is the man of love and sympathy. Is it not true then that God is infinite love and compassion? "God is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things."

What follows then? Just this: As surely as there is a good God in heaven, so there is a future life for those who love Him. Let me show you why this second truth necessarily flows from the first.

Unless there were a future life, there would be no distinction between right and wrong and this would not be a moral universe and the Creator not a morally good God. It is a truth that needs no argument that here in this world guilt often has happiness and innocence is on the scaffold. "The wicked flourish as the green bay tree." If God is a good God, a just God, as we know He is, there must be a time when these injustices of life will be straightened out and righteousness receive its full reward.

Unless there were a future life, pain and suffering, sorrow and agony would be without meaning. They could not be in a universe created by a good God. When we consider only the agonies of man's present existence, we are driven into pessimism, and are forced to admit that if there is no happier world hereafter, it were better that he had never been born. In one way we have more suffering than the lower animals for they do not look forward to suffering.



They do not anticipate trouble, they have no worries or anxieties. If men were convinced that there is no life after death, suicide would be common, especially among the more sensitive. But when we realize, as is undoubtedly true, that this world is a testing world, that pain and trouble develop personality, rendering it capable of immortality, then the reason for these things in a good universe controlled by a good God becomes at once apparent, and we are at once given courage and strength to bear our cross, knowing that he who suffers with Christ will also be glorified with Him.

Unless there were a future life, all our love for each other here would be but a tragedy, begetting only pain and bringing with it only ultimate disaster. All love must cause suffering through sympathy or else it is not love, and if love were to end in annihilation, the greatest wisdom would be not to love, to starve that instinct of human nature. When we see the one whom we have loved lowered into the grave, if that is all there is to our beautiful relationship, then are we of all creatures the most miserable. God would not be a god but a devil to wrest from our arms those to whom we cling so desperately, unless we were to be joined with them once more under much happier conditions. Never doubt but that God has implanted in our hearts that instinct of love which is the most wonderful thing in life as the token, the earnest of a



life to come. It is the foreshadowing of things to be. Here all love is incomplete. We always feel that there is some barrier which prevents us from entire union of soul and soul. It is because we are encased in separate bodies with minds which are like sealed books to one another. But there all that we hoped for, dreamed of, will come true, and the life which is begun here and but partially realized will there be enriched and fulfilled. The barrier has been broken down and now there is no longer separation but union in the Eternal Spirit. "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

It is this social reason for immortality which appeals to me personally more than any other. One would hardly care about a solitary immortality, a continuance of this life for its own joys. But one would care most intensely for an immortality where one is in perfect communion with those who have gone before, with the saints of the ages, with the loved ones whom he has lost awhile, with God the Father who is above all things most lovable. It is to such a Heaven that those who seek those things which are above may look forward with entire confidence.







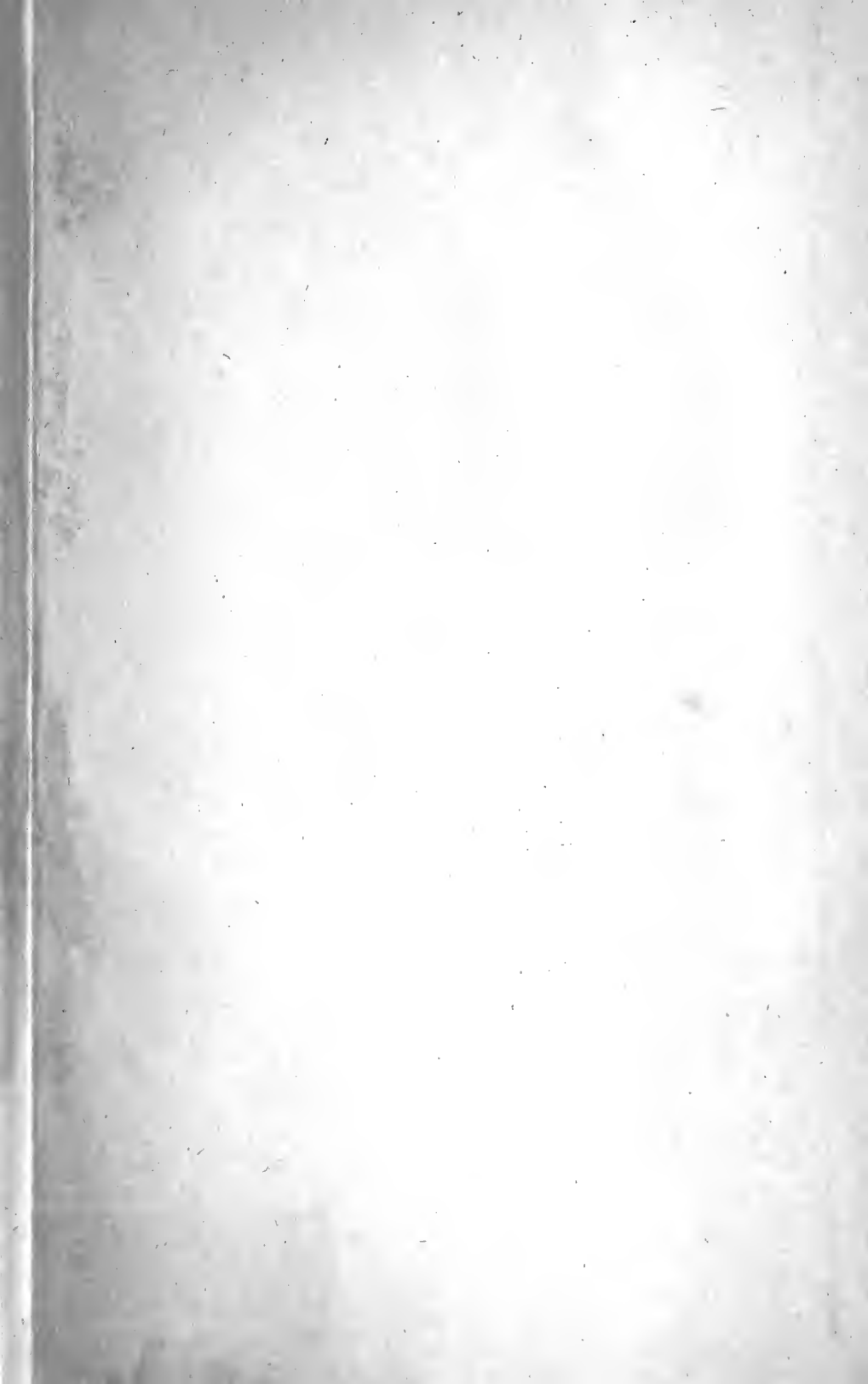


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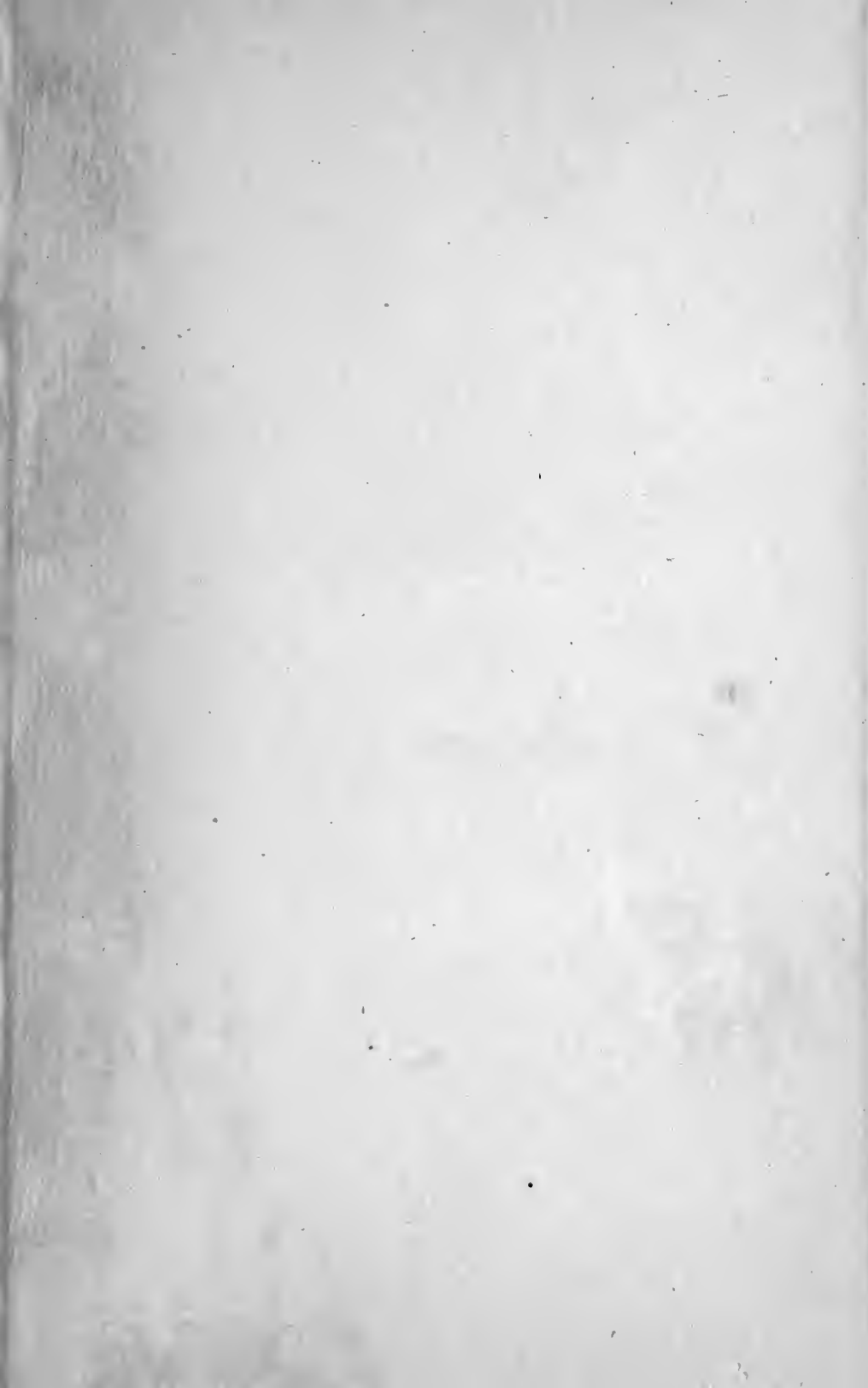


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